

Christmas Bells



May
Byron



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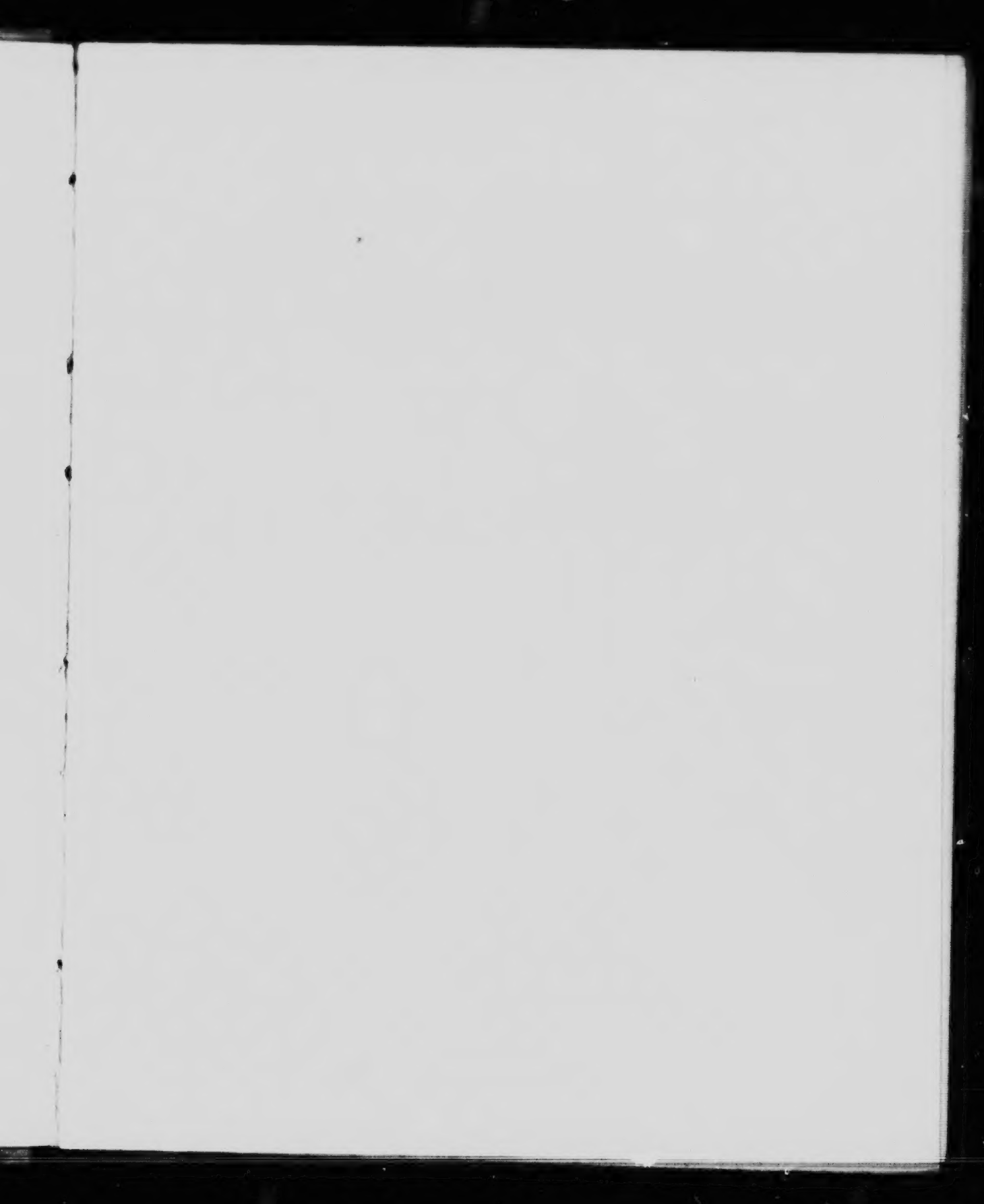
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In the beauty of the lilies Christ was
born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures
you and me."

Julia Ward Howe.





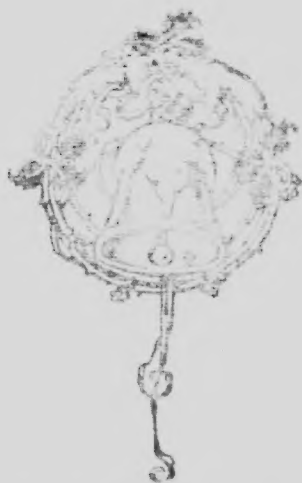
"The angels ring their golden peal aloft,
The shepherd hails it on the hillside drear"

CHRISTMAS BELLS

A BOOK OF JOY AND PEACE

by MAY BYRON

Illustrated by N. M. PRICE



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CONTENTS.

Christmas Bells.

The Children and the Chime.

There was no Room.

The Dream.

And was made Man.

With Pipe and Flute.

The Fold.

The Sentinel.

Oblations.

The Quest.

The Wandering Mother.

Child-Angels.

An Old Couple.

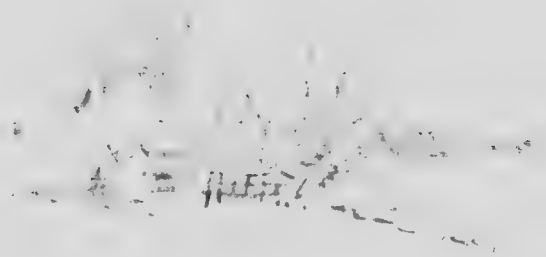
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CHRISTMAS BELLS.

The angels ring their golden peal aloft,
And all the joyful earth leaps up to
hear ;

The children answer it with laughter soft,
The shepherd hails it on the hillside drear :
The olden folk beside their waning fire,
The outcast wandering on the frozen fells,
They know the echo of their heart's desire
In your immortal note, dear Christmas
Bells !





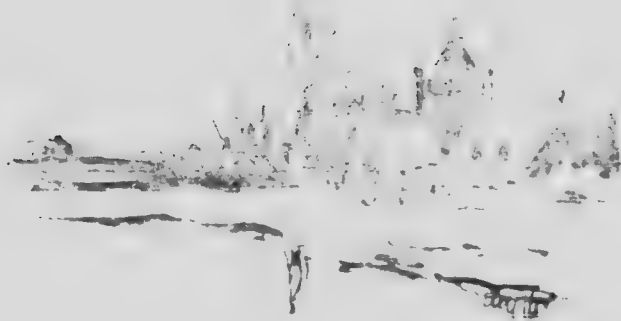
The Angels ring their far eternal chime,
And mortal men are stirred to make reply :
Across the wastes and wilds of Space and
Time,
They quicken to that pulsing melody.
To soldiers of the Master, sword in hand,—
To lonely souls that kneel in silent cells,
In that great language all can understand,
Float the good tidings of the Christmas
Bells.



The bells have stopped, and the night is dumb,-
This is the moment when He might come."

O Bells that chime from unforgotten hours
In lovely childhood of the long ago !
Sweeter than fragrance of a thousand flowers
Your music falls across the drifted snow ;
And as our gifts before the Babe we lay,
Craving His blessing,—still your rapture
tells
Of yonder Home-land, where we too, some
day,
In God's high streets shall hear His

CHRISTMAS BELLS.



THE CHILDREN AND THE CHIME.

Hark, hark ! listen and hark !
 Magical melodies out of the dark,
 Beautiful ripples of sound on sound,
 Scattering, pattering, hovering round !

Down from the sky the notes are flung,
 Like a ladder of music, rung by rung,—
 Like a wonderful ladder that Angels hold
 For a child to tread thro' the midnight cold.

Step by step and note by note
 The peal descends from a realm remote,—
 And something blends with it, small and sweet,
 Like tiny pit-a-pat baby feet.

Here at home it is happy and cosy,
 Curtains are drawn, and the fire burns rosy;
 Do you really think that a Child would roam
 So far away from its heavenly home ?

The bells have stopped, and the night is
dumb,—

This is the moment when He might come —

Wait, wait,—listen and wait,—

Somebody opened the garden-gate !

In the city of God the bells are a-chime
For joy and gladness of Christmas-time, —
But with children here, if they watch aright,—
The Christ-Child walks in the world to-night!



Dear night!... Christ's progress, and His
prayer-time,

The hours to which high Heaven doth chime,
God's silent, searching flight ;

When my Lord's head is filled with dew, and
all

His locks are wet with the dear drops of night.

Henry Vaughan.



THERE WAS NO ROOM.

He stepped adown the cloudy stair,
 Out of the golden glow,
 And came to seek a lodging bare
 In Bethlehem below.
 The doors were shut, the windows barred
 Against His Mother's plea :
 A stable-cavern, cold and hard,
 His mean abode must be.

Here in my heart's poor Bethlehem
 That Wanderer of the night
 Goes homeless, with a diadem
 Of sleet-drops sparkling bright.
 Through narrow streets where sordid cares
 And noisy pleasures base,
 Jostle and throng,—my Master fares,
 With no abiding-place.

Yet, hewn from out the stony rock,
A little room lies hidden
Enter therein,—no need to knock,
Thou welcome Guest unbidden !
Scant is the straw—I'll heap it up,—
And sparse the humble cheer,—
Yet, Lord, if Thou with me would'st sup,
To-night what joy were here !

When therefore the first spark of a desire after God arises in the soul, cherish it with all thy care, give all thy heart unto it ; it is nothing less than a touch of the Divine lodestone, that will draw thee out of the vanity of time into the riches of eternity. Set up, therefore, and follow it as gladly as the Wise Men of the East followed the star from heaven that appeared to them. It will do for thee as the star did for them, it will lead thee to the birth of Jesus : not in a stable at Bethlehem in Judea, but to the birth of Jesus in the dark centre of thy fallen soul.

William Law.



Chime III



THE DREAM.

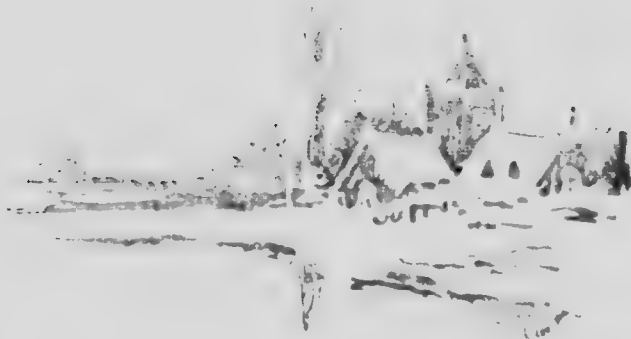
I saw a ship against the moon,
Sailing o'er the seas of night :
Flutes therein did importune
The still air with warblings bright,
And melody of rebecks gay
Companioned this clear roundelay,
Natus est Salvator.

The mainsail it was meetly wrought
All of holy joyance fair :
And the silken cordage taut
Was link'd strands of purest prayer :
And round the golden spars and mast
This stately music poured and passed,
Jesu, Splendor Patris !

With viols thus and dulcimers,
Swift before the wind it came,
Thronged with angel mariners,
Misty pearl and rose and flame :
Singing, they waded to the shore,
And in their arms a Babe they bore,
Princeps Angelorum.

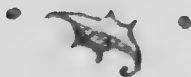
Thou Babe that from the shadowy wave
Liest here against my heart,
Thou of Whom all Heaven I crave,
Weak and little as Thou art,—
In the haven of my breast
Harbour Thou and ever rest,—
Spes et vita mea.





O the wonderful condescension of Thy
, tender mercy towards us, that Thou,
O Lord God, the Creator and Giver of life
to all spirits, dost vouchsafe to come into a
poor soul, and with Thy whole Deity and
humanity to appease the hunger thereof!

à Kempis.



Volume I.



AND WAS MADE MAN.

Out of the ivory palaces
Whereby they have made Thee glad,
Out of the sovereign majesties
Wherewith Thou wert crowned and clad,
Adown a cloudy stairway Thou hast stept,
And into a poor stable Thou hast crept,
While the world slept.

Out of the spheral harmonies
And singing of sevenfold quires,
Out of the passionate ecstasies
That the Face of the Lord inspires,
Unto the lowing of awakened kine,
And twitter of birds above that bed of Thine,
Pilgrim Divine.



H. M. PRICE

"Singing, they waded to the shore
And in their arms a Babe they bore."

Out of the glistening companies,
The cohorts of flame on flame,
Out of the phalanx of victories,
The hosts of the Holy Name,—
To simple folk, to men of peace and prayer,
Thou didst descend, their servitude to share,
And still art there.

Such is the true idea of the Christian life
—a life not of periodic observances, or of
occasional fervours, or even of splendid acts
of heroism and self devotion, but of quiet,
constant, unobtrusive earnestness, amidst the
commonplace of the world. This is the life
to which Christ calls us. Is it yours?

John Caird.

WITH PIPE AND FLUTE.

(The Shepherd's Carol.)

Within yon cave there lies a King,
As all my mates do tell :
To honour him what shall I bring,
For joy of this Noel ?
No treasures to me belong,
Whereout rich gifts are made,
I only have my little song,
With pipe and flute to aid.

Tall reeds beside the running brook,
From you my pipes I brought,
Green elder-boughs, of you my brook
And little flute were wrought :
That ripple of the shallow stream,
And murmur of the leaves,
Might sound as in a summer dream,
To cheer December eves.

And magic of the middle June,
When elderblooms do blow,
Shall float beneath the wintry moon
In fragrance to and fro :
And like the rocking of the reeds
The music's self shall sigh,
And sway across the lonely meads,
And croon His lullaby.

I that am late and last of all,
Standing in shadows deep,
With pipe and flute will softly call
Sweet echoes o'er His sleep ;
And if He smile or He disdain,
Throned on His Mother's breast,
And though my gift be all in vain,—
I shali have given my best.



No man is so poor as to have nothing worth giving ; as well might the mountain streamlets say they have nothing to give the the sea because they are not rivers.

Give what you have : to someone it may be better than you care to think.

Longfellow.

THE FOLD.

When God shall ope the gates of gold,
The portals of the heavenly fold,
And bid His flock find pastures wide
Upon a new earth's green hillside,

What poor strayed sheep shall hither fare,
Black-smirched beneath the sunny air,
To wash away in living springs
The mud and mire of earthly things !

What lonely ewes with eyes forlorn,
With weary feet and fleeces torn,
To whose shorn back no wind was stayed,
Nor any rough ways smooth were made :

What happy little lambs shall leap
To those sad ewes and spattered sheep,
With gamesome feet and joyful eyes,
From years of play in Paradise !

The wind is chill, the hour is late ;
Haste Thee, dear Lord, undo the gate,
For grim wolf-sorrows prowl and range
These bitter hills of chance and change :

And from the barren wilderness
With homeward face Thy flocks do press :
Their worn bells ring a jangled chime—
Shepherd, come forth, 'tis eventime.

Nothing less than this mysterious Incarnation could open a way, or begin a possibility for fallen man to be born again from above, and made again a partaker of the divine nature.

William Law.

THE SENTINEL.

All night a lonely sentinel I stood
Beside my watchfire's blown and fitful
flame,
And kept the feeble embers burning still.
The enemy lay camped within the wood,
I heard their bugles bray behind the hill,—
Across the night their scornful challenge
came,
"Lord, who will show us any good?"

Sirister shapes went slipping to and fro
Athwart the dark against a lurid glare :
As though old sins should rise from buried
years,
And old temptations done with long ago,
Shadows of Doubt, and fumes of black
Despair,
And ancient Hates, and half-forgotten
Fears,
Creeping upon me unaware.

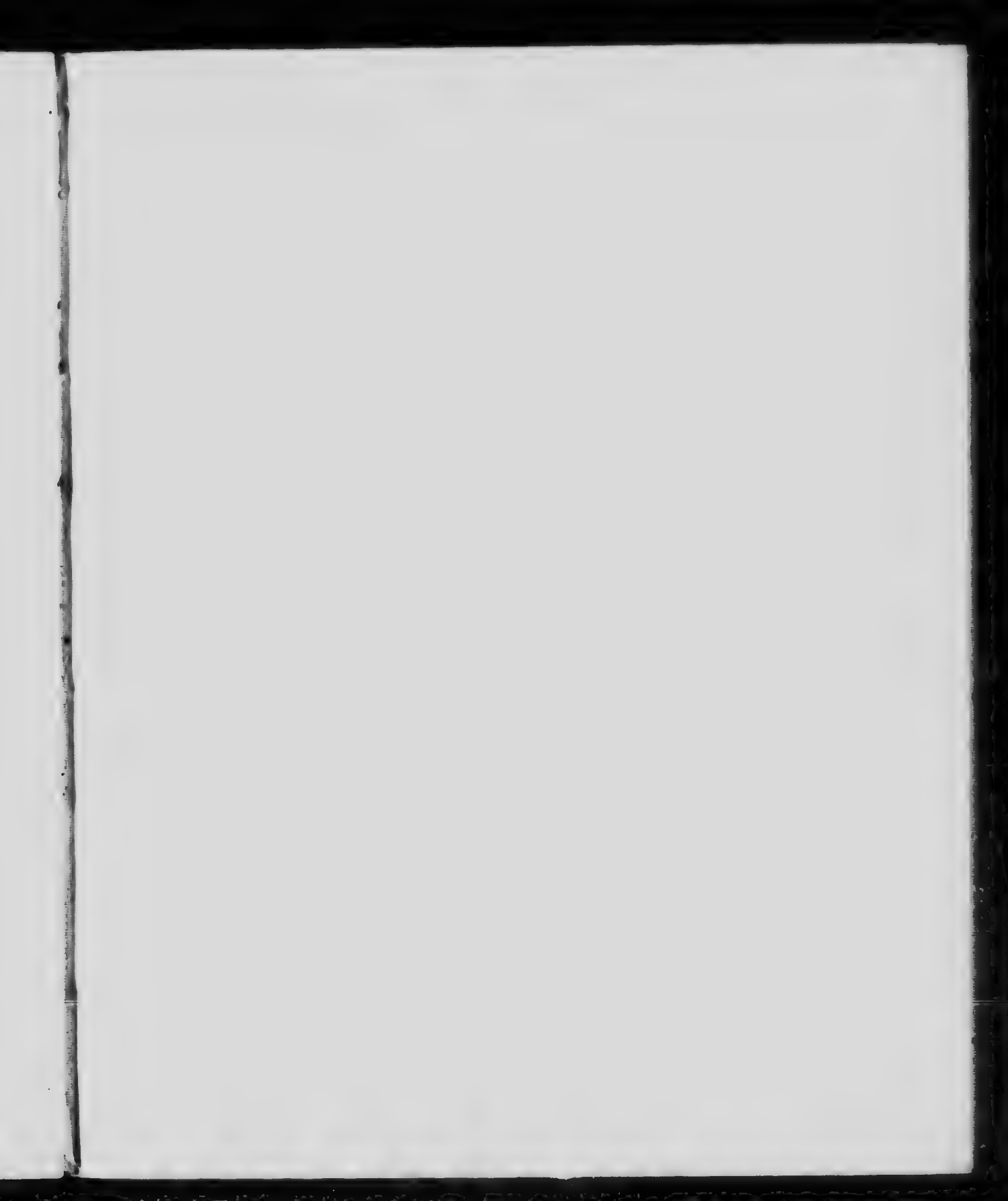
Then all my warfare seemed a hope forlorn,
And all my midnight vigil spent in vain,
And voices mocked, "*Thou servest God
for nought!*"

. . Hark! upon weary body and brain out-
worn

Sweet sounds were poured like rippling
summer rain,

The very strength of the Lord in me was
wrought,—

Victorious bells rang "Christ is born!"





Beneath her tattered shawl, unbidden.
Whiles have I hidden."

You are not yet out of the gunshot of the devil : you have not 'resisted unto blood, striving against sin : ' let the kingdom be always before you, and believe stedfastly concerning things that are invisible. Let nothing that is on this side of the other world get within you. Set your faces like a flint ; you have all power in heaven and earth on your side.

John Bunyan.

OBLATIONS.

They brought Thee Gold — Thee! by
 Whose tiny Hand
 The whole of God's great universe was
 spanned.

—And I have had a vision,—and I saw
 The Gold neglected lie among the straw.

They brought Thee Frankincense—to Whom
 ascend
 All sweetnesses of flowers, world without
 end.

—And I have had a vision,—and I say
 The Frankincense fell down amid the hay.

They brought Thee Myrrh—Thee! Who
 wast there to know
 All human bitterness, all mortal woe.
 But I have had a vision,—and I aver
 That Thou didst stoop and gather up the
 Myrrh.

Now consider first the Myrrh. It is bitter : and this is a type of the bitterness which must be tasted before a man can find God, when he first turns from the world to God, and all his likings and desires have to be utterly changed.

John Tauler.

THE QUEST.

Thou little Child with naked feet
That walkest in the noisy street,
Whence comest Thou, and wither goest?
Say, if Thou knowest.

By muddy kerb and flaring gas,
I see Thy tiny footsteps pass ;
On sodden face and ragged singer
Thy wide eyes linger.

Thou stay'st not by the windows bright,
That flaunt their gaudy wares to-night,
From gold and gems that show so bravely,
Thou turnest gravely.

Nor dainty food, nor glittering toy
Allure Thy glance, Thou little Boy :
O, where bareheaded dost Thou wander,
On what dost ponder ?

Then said the Child, " In wind and wet
I seek and seek a dwelling yet :
Here is no stable and no manger
For Me the Stranger.

" The flower-girl on whose tawdry gown
The drops of rain are soaking down,—
Beneath her tattered shawl, unbidden,
Whiles have I hidden.

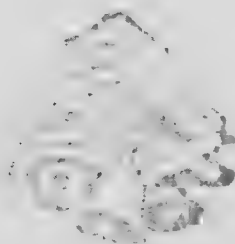
" The shabby, weary, faded folk,
Bowed down beneath the accustomed yoke,
With coarsened hands and faces hollow,
Homeward I follow ;

" And I will enter all unknown
Across their dingy threshold stone ;
Poor, tired, obscure, they shall be blest there ;
For I will rest there."

If thou hast that newborn Child that was lost and is found again, then let it be seen in power and virtue, and let us openly see the sweet Child Jesus brought forth by thee, that we may see that thou art His nurse: if not, then the children in Christ will say, thou hast found nothing but the history, namely, the cradle of the Child.

Jacob Behmer.

Chime X



THE WANDERING MOTHER.

Cold is the driving snow,—
But O, her heart is colder,
Wandering to and fro
With the babe upon her shoulder !

Poor daughter of despair,
Outcast, repelled, forsaken,
In the drear twilight, where
Shall her hopeless road be taken,—

To face the stabbing blast,
To front the snow-storm blindly,
Till Life shall learn at last
Of a Death more just, more kindly ?

One Friend indeed remains,—
But He, past wind and weather,
Among His seraphs' strains,
Has forgotten her altogether. .

A sudden gush of bells
Across the world is welling,
A voice that sinks and swells
In a joy too sweet for telling :

And lo! celestial balm
Breathes lily-fragrant o'er her,—
All comfort and all calm,
They are shaping themselves before her.

Sinful and undefiled,
They spread their arms to each other,—
The Mother towards the Child,
And the Child towards the Mother.



All comfort and all calm,
They are shaping themselves before her "

2

Consider what St. Augustine says, that he sought God in many places, and came at last to find Him in himself. Do you think it is of little importance for a distracted soul to understand this truth, and to show that she need not go to Heaven to speak with her Eternal Father, or to regale herself with Him? Nor need she speak aloud, for however low she may speak, He is so near, that He will hear us.

Santa Teresa.

Child-angels



CHILD-ANGELS.

A flickering cloud of petals,
A flock of butterflies bright,
That floats and flutters and settles,
Poised on a rose of light,—
With eyes that sparkle and glisten,
Dancing with lovely mirth,
The little child-angels listen
To the echoing chime on earth.

Mothers bereft and lonely
Here is a sight for you.
Are they not singing, as only
Happiest babies do?
While shadows of winter darken
O'er you in your drought and dearth,
The little child-angels listen
And laugh to the bells on earth.

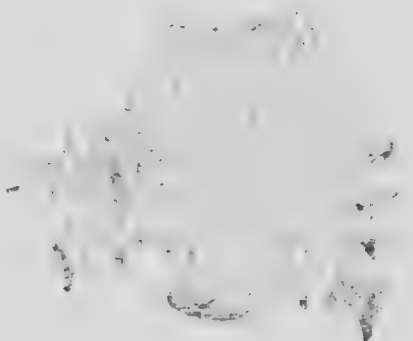


The little child-angels listen
To the echoing chime on earth."

★

**In raptures you may not reckon,
Of God's own Presence possess,
They dwell and rejoice,—would you beckon
Your nestlings back to the nest?
For Joy is the only treasure,
And Love is the only worth,
Where the little child-angels measure
The melodies down on earth!**





Love is the greatest thing that God can
give us, for Himself is love: and it
is the greatest thing that we can give to God,
for it will also give ourselves, and carry with
it all that is ours.

Jeremy Taylor.

AN OLD COUPLE.

You and I, sitting side by side, Darby and
Joan his wife,—

Shut in the peace of the tranquil years that
follow the strain and strife,—

Our locks grow greyer, our limbs grow
weaker, the suns of our youth have set,—
But the tender call of the Christmas Bells,
we smile that we hear it yet.

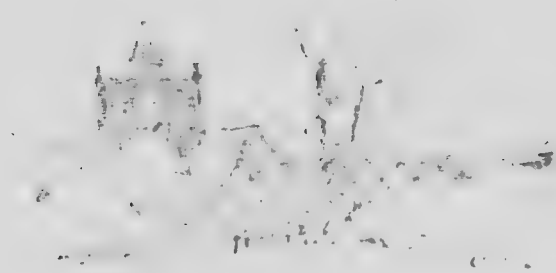
You and I, going hand in hand on the quiet
downhill track,

The road that every traveller knows, the
Road-of-No-Turning-Back,—

And flowers grow fewer, and steps grow
slower,—but ever by night and day

The memories born of the Christmas Bells
have followed us all the way.

**You and I, dear heart of my heart,—it shall
not be long to wait
Till side by side, and hand-in-hand, pray God,
we shall gain the Gate ;
When eyes grow dimmer and ears grow
duller,—O hark, in a golden air
The voices clear of the Christmas Bells shall
give us a welcome there !**



Now he who will in love give his whole
diligence and might thereto will verily
come to know the true eternal peace which is
GodHimself, as far as that is possible to a
creature: insomuch that what was bitter to
him beforeshall become sweet, and his heart
shall remain unmoved under all changes, at
all times, and after this life he shall attain
everlasting peace.

Theologia Germanica.

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